

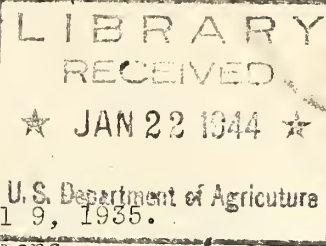
## **Historic, archived document**

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.



1.9  
576 Pad  
April 19, 1935

CREATING NATIONAL FORESTS



RADIO BROADCAST - Over WISN, 6 P.M., Tuesday, April 9, 1935.  
By Scott Leavitt, In Charge of Public Relations  
North Central Region  
U. S. Forest Service, Milwaukee, Wis.

Reserve

In the broadcast of two weeks ago I said that the Federal Government is establishing several great National Forests in these North Central States, here in the midst of a vast population and where nearly all of the land was given away and sold by the Government to the homesteaders and private owners generations ago. That statement raised a very natural question:

"How can the Government create National Forests where it does not own the land? Is it reversing its ancient policy and beginning to buy back what it once gave away or sold for a song, when the country was new and pioneers were advancing the frontiers of the Republic into the West?"

The answer is "Yes;" not all of the lands, of course, but only those which time and often bitter experience have proven to be of more value for the raising of trees than for anything else, and then only within definite areas previously approved as Purchase Units by the National Forest Reservation Commission.

It is an interesting development of planning for the future welfare of the Nation, this rebuying of land for the rebuilding of forests. Thought about, it will convince you, I am sure, that it is one of the wisest, one of the most far-sighted policies which our Government can possibly follow.

To keep the picture clear, let it be restated that the nine States of this region of the United States Forest Service are Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, and North Dakota. Recall also that eight of these States once grew vast forests, and that six of them once were the greatest producers of lumber in our country. Recall further that after years of farming and industrial development, and generations of experience to determine the best uses to which these lands can be put, it is definitely known that there still are some 83,000,000 acres within these nine States which ought by every standard of wisdom to be dedicated permanently to the production of forests. Add to all this the fact that these forest areas are at the very thresholds of one-third of all the people who live in the United States, and you will readily see that all of the values which any forested areas possess, wherever they are - all of their values for the production of timber, as haunts of wild animals, of fish and of birds, as recreation places for the crowded people of cities; for the conservation of water; for the reduction of floods; for the saving of soils from erosion - all of these inestimable values are emphasized and multiplied here beyond measure.

With these 83,000,000 acres, which are as great in size as two of the States, now largely idle or lazy and unfit for farming; burned over after the often wasteful cutting of timber; with soil exposed and washing into the rivers; struggling against forest fires in nature's effort to restore a poor semblance of their original value and beauty - it is a matter of wise statesmanship and of the long forward look to put to work on them as many as we can of those young men of the nation who are unemployed because of economic conditions. There they will be engaged in the constructive task of reclaiming and rebuilding all possible of these natural forest areas, and, in doing it, will at one and the same time be preserving the spirit of the young men themselves, on whose devotion the future of this Republic must rest.

As much as possible of this emergency work should be performed where it will bear permanent fruit for the sustenance of our country in the years yet to come, and with that sound thought in mind, it is clearly apparent that the restoring and conserving of forests offers probably the greatest single field in which there may be secured worth while and lasting benefits from emergency labor.

In addition to what all the States and private owners are doing there is wide scope for activity by the Federal Government. But if its effects are to bring these desired permanent results, a reasonable amount of the lands upon which the work is performed must be acquired by and remain in the ownership of the Federal Government. Forestry is a matter of years and advance planning, and it requires the proper control of the lands involved, so that trained foresters may continue, even for generations, to practise sound forestry methods.

Back in 1907, when Theodore Roosevelt was president, he once created some 16,000,000 acres of new National Forests in the far western mountains, by a mere stroke of his pen. He thus dramatically thwarted a movement to deprive him of that power. It was possible for him to do that because, then, almost limitless forested areas existed in the west in the form of public domain. The Government already owned them. But today a far different situation is to be faced.

While it is true that there are 83,000,000 acres of land which certainly ought to be dedicated to the raising of trees still existing here in these North Central States, very little belongs to the Federal Government. Whatever becomes National forest here, in addition to those areas which already are National Forests, must be acquired by purchase, exchange or agreement with owners.

Prior to two years ago there were but six national forests in those nine states - two in Minnesota, two in Michigan, and two in Wisconsin. But in 1933 there came, in connection with the nation-wide recovery program, a sudden and tremendous expansion.

It was possible to move thus quickly, because two acts of Congress already existed which authorized the purchase and exchange of forest lands. It was but necessary to make greatly increased appropriations and to set up the required additional machinery for action. Those laws were the Weeks Act of 1911 and the Clarke-McNary Law of 1924.

So when, as one of the most constructive parts of the relief and rehabilitation program, adequate appropriations were made and the C. C. C. camps were fortunately established to take 300,000 young men at a time from off the streets and put them at useful work, the acquisition of forest lands upon which their labor might be expended was speeded up to such a remarkable degree that history will call it an epic event.

When May of 1933 dawned there were but 4,734,531 acres within the exterior boundaries of those original five National Forests. In Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Missouri and North Dakota there were none at all. But before that year had passed 3,486,693 acres more had been added. Before 1934 had passed by, another 2,607,269 acres were included. January and March of this year of 1935 saw the total swelled by the startling amount of 8,321,722 acres. And the end is not yet.

All this, of course, does not mean that these entire areas of land now belong to the Federal Government. In all likelihood, even when all has been acquired which should and can be, of the almost 19,000,000 acres within the exterior limits of these purchase units, not more than 14,500,000 acres will belong to the Government. There are inside those boundaries some good farming lands, and they will not be purchased. There will be found some owners who do not wish to sell. That is for them to decide. They will not be coerced.

The mechanics of acquiring the land are simple. The Forest Service, having studied an area and pronounced it suitable, so reports to the National Forest Reservation Commission. The Secretaries of War, Interior and Agriculture, two United States Senators and two members of the House of Representatives make up that Commission. They must approve the purchase of forest lands within definite boundaries before they can be bought.

The Forest Service then conducts an intensive survey of the authorized lands, and appraises their value per acre.

The representatives of the Forest Service negotiate personally and separately with every owner. Each transaction is a personal one. If the owner finally desires to sell at a price agreeable to him and the Government, an option is taken, and if the title is found clear, the sale is completed.

Such operations are now under way within 39 purchase units in this Region, totaling 18,881,758 acres. It is interesting to know how they are distributed.

There are two in Illinois totaling 842,042 acres; 6 totaling 2,200,085 acres in Wisconsin; 5 totaling 1,464,000 acres in Ohio; 4 totaling 781,320 acres in Indiana; 5 totaling 4,779,604 acres in Michigan; 3 totaling 3,900,162 acres in Minnesota; 4 totaling 829,000 acres in Iowa; 8 totaling 3,313,705 acres in Missouri, and 2 totaling 771,840 acres in North Dakota.

I am speaking only, of course, of this North Central Region of the Forest Service. Similar operations constructive of forests are going forward in every part of the Union.



Very fortunately for the local communities within which such a sudden transition of forest ownership is under way, there are years of experience back of the operations of the U. S. Forest Service. In its present form the Service has been at work for 30 years, and even behind that lie several preliminary years. To meet western conditions years ago Congress provided that 25% of the gross income of the National Forests should be paid into the treasuries of the counties in which National Forests lie, and that an additional 10% should be spent in the development of roads within and tributary to the forests. These sums are in lieu of taxes, and they are supplemented by the building of roads and improvements beyond those amounts.

In restoring and improving the forests, employment is at once supplied to local people, and as they develop, lumber industries are established. The further fact is that most of the land bought has long paid no taxes; but before the government will purchase, all back taxes must be paid thus securing for the counties cash which it stood never to get.

Questions arise in your minds about how these lands will be used, by what methods the forest growth on them will be restored and protected and at the same time perpetually used; how recreational enjoyment of these forests will be encouraged and fostered; how the Civilian Conservation Corps with its thousands of young men enter so necessarily and helpfully into the picture; how the rebuilding of these forests and the improvement and use of those which already exist will give permanent stability to thousands of homes, through furnishing seasonal employment to supplement inadequate farm incomes. All of these things will be taken up in their turn.

This entire program interests us because we recognize in it a sound and constructive plan to rebuild and maintain values of natural resources which were and must again be made bases of our national vigor and greatness.

Tonight we speak particularly of how the lands upon which to erect this rebuilt edifice are being acquired.

The allotted time of this broadcast is ending, and no Forest Service broadcast must be allowed to close without recalling the tragic fact that forest fires can render futile every effort we make to conserve forests, if they are allowed to ravage the woods.

The success of any forestry program depends first and last on fire prevention and control.

Years ago one fire swept over 1,280,000 acres here in Wisconsin, and took a toll of 1,500 human lives. It is called the Peshtigo fire, and the western rim of its area is now in a national forest. It will be of little use to establish a forest there if other fires are to follow in the wake of that tragic disaster.

Last Saturday, as a nation, we observed Army Day in the cause of national defense. There is another army of national defense in which all of us - young and old, boys and girls, men and women - all of us who love our country may and should enlist.

The oath of that army is "I pledge myself to protect our forests from fire."

A fire in its advance through the forests is like an invading army. It leaves death and desolation behind it. It destroys the happiness and prosperity of the people. We should treat it as an enemy, and feel that for us, through carelessness or design, to cause or neglect forest fires is treason, like that of aiding and abetting an enemy in time of war. For a war against forest fires always is on.

